

(Washington, DC)— U.S. Representative Chet Edwards announced that the fiscal year 2011 Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill was approved by the House July 28th by a bipartisan vote of 411 to 6. Edwards authored the bill as Chairman of the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee.

Edwards said, *“I am proud of our bipartisan work to honor our nation’s veterans, troops, and military families. This bill continues our historic commitment to America’s veterans and military families, and sends a clear message that we deeply respect their service and sacrifice. These additional resources will provide our veterans with their benefits more quickly and improve access to important health care and other services. In my book, our veterans and military families have earned every dime of this funding.”* □

With passage of the 2011 bill, Edwards’ subcommittee will have provided a 70 percent increase in funding for veterans health care and benefits since January 2007, over 10,000 new claims processors to reduce VA case backlogs, 3,389 doctors and 14,316 nurses, 145 community-based outpatient clinics, and 92 new vet centers. In addition, the bill continues last year’s first ever two-year advance appropriations for VA, the highest priority of major national veterans’ groups, to ensure dependable funding of veterans health care. Advance appropriations makes more efficient use of tax payer money by allowing longer term planning by the VA.

The bill is strongly supported by major national veterans groups such as the American Legion, VFW, and Disabled American Veterans (DAV). **The Independent Budget**, made up of the VFW, DAV, Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA), and American Veterans (AMVETS), strongly support the bill and thanked Edwards for his *“unwavering support for our nation’s sick and disabled veterans, as well as all of the men and women who have so honorably served this country.”*

The 2011 bill also includes \$200 million over the Administration’s request to continue Edwards’ efforts to modernize Guard and Reserve facilities begun last year. This money will go to the highest unfunded military construction priorities of the commanders of the reserve components

of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. Overall, this would provide more than \$1.8 billion for Guard and Reserve military construction, the largest single appropriation for Guard and Reserve military construction since at least 1964.

Retired Maj. Gen. Gus L. Hargett Jr., National Guard Association of the United States president said, *"Today, Chairman Edwards continued to lead the congressional effort to modernize our aging National Guard facilities. We are grateful for their leadership, and the actions of the committee speak volumes about their support of citizen-soldiers and airmen."*

Edwards continued, *"This bill says to Guard and Reserve forces that just as you have kept your promises to our country, we intend to keep our promises to you."*

With increased funding, Congressman Edwards has insisted on increased oversight to ensure that taxpayer funds are spent effectively and efficiently by government contractors in Afghanistan.

"In an era when Americans are asking us to cut spending and reduce our deficits, this bill reflects our continued willingness to provide the resources our service members and veterans deserve, but with a careful eye to the management of those resources by the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs. Whether in Afghanistan or here at home, taxpayers' dollars should be spent wisely and for the purposes for which they are intended," **said Edwards.**

Edwards' subcommittee has also funded several initiatives over the last three years to improve the quality of life for our military and their families including \$3 billion for six new military hospitals including Fort Hood, \$1 billion for new child care centers to serve 20,000 military children, and \$900 million in additional funding for improved barracks over that three year period. According to Department of Defense historical data, in the past three years, Edwards' subcommittee has invested more in military construction than in any comparable period since 1948.

"Our troops and their families are making great sacrifices in support of our nation's defense. We can never fully repay them for their service to country, but we must do everything we can to support them," **Edwards concluded.**

Overall, the 2011 Military Construction & Veterans Affairs Appropriations bill totals \$77.3 billion in discretionary spending to honor and serve America's service men and women and veterans.

For a complete summary of the bill, visit: http://appropriations.house.gov/images/stories/pdf/mi_vet/MC_FY11_FullC_Summary_-_Final_as_reported_-_07.20.2010.pdf

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